



FISHERIES STRUCTURAL ASSISTANCE

Initially funded by the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG), the European fisheries policy was funded by the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) for 2007-2013, and is presently funded by the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), worth EUR 6.4 billion over 2014-2020. The EMFF supports fishermen in the transition to sustainable fishing, supports coastal communities in diversifying their economies and finances projects to create new jobs and improve the quality of life along European coasts.

LEGAL BASIS

Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the fisheries structural policy is to provide the financial measures for the implementation of the common fisheries policy (CFP) and the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture areas. It supports fishermen in complying with new requirements such as those relating to the discard ban, new safety measures and changes to working conditions, data collection and port infrastructure.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Background

The fisheries structural policy originated in 1970 with the decision to apply to the European Agriculture Guidance Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), Guidance Section, to support construction, modernisation, marketing and processing within the fisheries sector.

In 1992, the Edinburgh European Council decided to incorporate fisheries structural policy into the Structural Funds with its own objective, Objective 5(a) (adaptation of



fisheries structures), and its own financial instrument, the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG). To provide financial support for fisheries-dependent areas, the Community initiative concerning the restructuring of the fisheries sector (PESCA) was put in place for the 1994-1999 period, together with accompanying measures such as early retirement, incentives for young fishermen, etc.

Agenda 2000 introduced new guidelines, which included the incorporation of the structural problems of fisheries-dependent areas into the new Objective 2 of the Structural Funds and the non-renewal of the PESCA initiative in 2000. Council Regulation (EC) No 1263/1999 established the new FIFG framework for intervention for the 2000-2006 period, with a view to achieving a sustainable balance between fisheries resources and their exploitation.

B. The European Fisheries Fund (EFF)

1. As part of the CFP reform, the EFF replaced the FIFG as of the 2007-2013 period and had five priorities:

- Supporting the main objectives of the CFP, ensuring sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources and a stable balance between those resources and the capacity of the EU fishing fleet;
- Increasing the competitiveness and economic viability of operators in the sector;
- Promoting environmentally friendly fishing and production methods;
- Providing adequate support for those employed in the sector;
- Facilitating diversification of economic activity in areas dependent on fishing.

The total EFF budget for 2007-2013 amounted to EUR 3 849 million (EUR 2 908 million for convergence areas and EUR 941 million for non-convergence areas).

2. Types of action:

- Measures for the adaptation of the Community fishing fleet (aid for the permanent or temporary withdrawal of fishing vessels, or for training, redeployment or early retirement);
- Aquaculture, processing and marketing: promoting the acquisition and use of gear and methods that reduce the impact of fishing on the environment, especially of fishing by small and micro-enterprises;
- Measures of common interest: projects that helped sustainable development or the conservation of resources, the strengthening of markets in fishery products or the promotion of partnerships between scientists and operators in the fisheries sector were eligible for aid;
- Sustainable development of coastal fisheries areas: support for measures and initiatives aimed at diversifying and strengthening economic development in areas affected by the decline in fishing activities;
- Technical assistance: action relating to the preparation, monitoring, administrative and technical support, evaluation, auditing and control necessary for implementing the proposed regulation.



The Member States were responsible for the allocation of financial resources among these five priorities.

THE EUROPEAN MARITIME AND FISHERIES FUND (EMFF)

To give effect to Parliament's agreement with the Council on the new and thoroughly revised CFP, the EMFF, as proposed by the Commission and initially modified by Parliament in 2013, has been further amended, taking its final shape in an agreement with the Council.

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) for the 2014-2020 period. The Fund is part of Heading 2: Sustainable growth and natural resources. It is the main financial tool in support of the EU's common fisheries policy (CFP). A small amount of the EMFF aims to support an integrated maritime policy (IMP). The CFP promotes mainly sustainable fishing, sustainable aquaculture, control and enforcement, data collection and the blue economy. The EMFF also gives support to EU-wide objectives in maritime and coastal affairs such as international governance, marine knowledge and maritime spatial planning. The total amount allocated to the EMFF for the 2014-2020 period is EUR 6 400 million. The ESI Funds operate under common rules and provisions (see Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013), which improve and harmonise their coordination and implementation. The EMFF co-finances projects together with national funding: each Member State is allocated a share of the total Fund budget, depending on the size of its fishing industry (level of employment and of production, size of the fishing fleet, etc.). Each Member State then prepares an operational programme describing the allocation of the funding resources, to be approved by the Commission. National authorities have a mandate to choose the projects to be funded, and are jointly responsible with the Commission for the implementation of the operational programme.

This programme supports the following four main areas:

A. Environmentally sustainable EU fisheries

- Investment in more selective fishing gear to eliminate discards and thus manage the impact of the obligation to land all catches imposed by the CFP reform as of 2015;
- Following a specific demand of Parliament, priority for data collection and controls through a substantial increase in the share of the EMFF allocated for this purpose;
- Implementation of measures to preserve stocks, such as biological rest periods;
- Freezing subsidies for operators who do not comply with CFP rules.

B. A competitive EU fisheries sector

- Entry aid (up to EUR 75 000 investment in vessels under 12 m) for fishermen under 40 with at least five years' professional experience in the sector;



- Support for diversification of fishermen's income via ancillary activities (e.g. pesca-tourism): significantly, Parliament has rejected the retraining-out-of-fishing option originally proposed by the Commission;
- On-board investment to better manage catches and improve their quality, as well as investment in port infrastructure to meet the landing obligation;
- Support for innovation, including the development of more modern and environmentally friendly vessels;
- Support for production and marketing plans drawn up by producers' organisations;
- Final-exit aid for scrapping of vessels in order to reduce capacity and fishing effort of the fleet;
- Support with engine replacement to reduce power and CO₂ emissions (conditional on decreasing engine power for vessels between 12 and 24 metres).

C. Better social conditions

- Investment to improve health, hygiene and safety on board;
- Vocational training for fishermen;
- Setting up a mutual insurance fund to cover natural disasters and environmental or health-related accidents (covering fishermen, as well as oyster farmers for blight).

D. Blue growth (aquaculture)

- Support to strengthen technological development, innovation and knowledge transfer;
- Enhancement of the competitiveness and viability of aquaculture enterprises, in particular of small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Initiatives to protect and restore aquatic biodiversity and to enhance ecosystems related to aquaculture;
- Promotion of aquaculture having a high level of environmental protection, of animal health and welfare and of public health and safety;
- Development of professional training, new professional skills and lifelong learning. To implement these measures, Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) are relevant: they embrace an integrated approach, allowing for new initiatives and applications that can be injected into all existing economic activities through the promotion of innovation, young firm formation and bottom-up approaches. These principles can thus play an important role in stimulating blue growth.

Budget

The EMFF for the 2014-2020 period amounts to EUR 6.4 billion. 89% of the Fund is managed by the Member States, being used for reducing the impact of fisheries on the marine environment, providing more market tools for consumers and professionals, promoting joint stewardship of protected areas, and supporting small-scale fisheries. Of this amount:



- EUR 4 340 million are allocated to the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture, including marketing and processing-related measures, technical assistance, local development and support for fisheries areas;
- EUR 580 million are allocated to control and enforcement measures, in order to monitor compliance with the CFP and protect fair access to healthy stocks. These include control of access to fishing grounds, fishing effort, TACs and quotas;
- EUR 520 million are allocated to finance data collection for better long-term management of fisheries (e.g. understanding and monitoring of commercial species and of the dynamics of single-stock as well as mixed fisheries, and ecological modelling of regional basins);
- EUR 71 million are allocated to blue economy measures, to provide sustainable growth and job creation from marine resources in areas such as maritime surveillance, improved knowledge of the seas and ecosystems, and responsible exploitation of new marine resources (energy, biotech, etc.);
- EUR 192.5 million are allocated to the compensation of outermost regions (ORs), whose fleets are mostly composed of small-scale vessels. The EMFF takes into account ORs' specific handicaps through intensified public aid and a specific compensation scheme of additional costs for fishery and aquaculture products.

The Commission manages directly the remaining 11% to support EU-wide projects in maritime and coastal affairs, including marine spatial planning, international governance and cooperation, and exchange of information and best practices.

Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

Structural assistance to the CFP is regulated by the MFF, which lays down the maximum annual amounts the EU may spend in different political fields. It provides a scheme for financial programming and budgetary discipline ensuring that EU spending is predictable and stays within the agreed limits, over a period long enough to make common policies effective. The MFF 2014-2020 is divided into six categories of expenses corresponding to different areas of activity, one of which is Sustainable Growth and Natural Resources, which includes the CFP and has a budget of EUR 420 billion. On 2 May 2018 the Commission published its proposal for the MFF 2021-2027, and on 12 June 2018 DG MARE published its proposal for the EMFF outlining the following key priorities:

- Fostering sustainable fisheries and the conservation of marine biological resources;
- Contributing to food security in the European Union through sustainable and competitive aquaculture and markets;
- Enabling the growth of a sustainable blue economy and fostering prosperous coastal communities;
- Strengthening international ocean governance and enabling safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed seas and oceans.



ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament votes both the budget and its discharge. The co-legislators vote the EMFF proposal using the ordinary legislative procedure. Parliament scrutinises EU expenditure through the ESI Funds during the annual budgetary discharge procedure.

On 6 July 2016 Parliament debated and adopted an own-initiative report on the preparation of the post-electoral revision of the MFF 2014-2020^[1], as its input to the process ahead of the Commission's presentation of the mid-term review of the MFF. On 11 November 2017, the Committee on Fisheries voted its opinion for the Committee on Budgets on the next MFF: preparing Parliament's position on the MFF post-2020.

On 13 March 2019, Parliament adopted a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 as regards certain rules relating to the EMFF by reason of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union^[2]. This EU regulation applies to the ongoing 2014-2020 EMFF.

On 4 April 2019, Parliament adopted a legislative proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for the 2021-2027 period^[3]. That fund should aim to target funding from the Union budget to support the Common Fisheries Policy, the Union's maritime policy and the Union's international commitments on ocean governance.

Carmen-Paz Martí
05/2019

[1]OJ C 101, 16.3.2018, p. 64.

[2][P8_TA-PROV\(2019\)0183](#).

[3][P8_TA\(2019\)0343](#).

